

# WE COMMIT OURSELVES:

A social justice newsletter of the Sisters of St. Joseph, Third Order St. Francis



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- Marian Prayer



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—Social Justice Committee

## Taking Time to Remember Peace

by Sister Dorothy Pagosa

**D**uring this time of Advent and Christmas we are reminded how Jesus came into the world as a **herald of peace** during very tumultuous times. As we face challenges in our own time and world, it is good to reflect on those challenges and how we, too, can be heralds of peace.

**W**e are faced with the challenge of migrants being denied access to asylum hearings in the U.S. We have included a statement from the Leadership Conference of Women Religious about welcoming migrants.

**T**he 2018 UN Climate Change Conference of Parties (COP 24) started December 3<sup>rd</sup> and ends December 15<sup>th</sup> in Poland. We have a brief report from a member of the Global Catholic Climate Movement.

**N**ovember is Black Sisters month, as designated by the National Black Sisters Conference. It is very fitting that the US



Conference of Catholic Bishops on November 18 unanimously agreed to advance the cause of canonization of Sr. Thea Bowman, FSPA.

**M**ost importantly, this is a time for hope. May we all continue to be **heralds of peace** and of hope. ■

## LCWR Calls for the Welcome and Humane Treatment of Arriving Migrants

**T**he Leadership Conference of Women Religious (LCWR) is deeply troubled by President Trump's continued denigration of those fleeing untenable situations in their home countries. These are mothers and fathers, sisters and brothers who

have been forced from their homes by unimaginable violence and insecurity; runaway corruption; and droughts and floods linked to climate change.

**T**hese are women and girls fleeing intolerable situations of domestic violence. These are young

men and women who have no access to quality education and no hope of economic opportunity.

**T**hese are courageous people who have rejected cultures of corruption and exploitation. They are

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*"We embrace our immigrant roots and identify with the struggle of all people to find a home in this world."*

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26<sup>th</sup> General Chapter



### *LCWR Calls for Welcome...continued from p. 1*

traveling the same road trod by our forebearers who fled tyranny and violence in search of the American dream. They are people of hope and promise who only want the opportunity to contribute their toil and talent to this nation.

**W**e reject the president's rhetoric of fear and policy of division that poisons our politics. We choose instead to embrace a dream for America that is filled with hope for a nation united in service of the common good.

We stand with Pope Francis who calls us to "promote the dignity of all our brothers and sisters, particularly the poor and the excluded of society, those who are abandoned, immigrants and those who suffer violence and human trafficking."

**W**e urge the administration to manage refugee arrivals humanely and in a manner that respects their dignity and rights under US and international law and to:

- Allow migrants to approach our border and ask for protection in the United States and to be admitted for processing in a timely manner.

- Ensure that asylum seekers have access to legal counsel and receive a fair resolution of their claim.
- Guarantee that parents and children stay together after they are apprehended. Holding families indefinitely in detention or detaining parents while releasing their children violates the values of this nation and the standards set forth in the Flores settlement.
- Eschew detention of those awaiting adjudication of their asylum petitions in favor of alternatives that are more humane and more cost efficient.
- Direct Homeland Security to cooperate with faith-based and humanitarian organizations who are prepared to assist asylum-seekers.

**T**he United States has a long and proud history of welcoming immigrants and sheltering refugees. Women religious have been blessed to be able to accompany and serve migrant communities across this country for a very long time. We will continue to welcome them as our national history demands and our faith requires.

■ *Leadership Council of Women Religious*

## Global Catholic Climate Movement

**T**he Global Catholic Climate Movement team arrived in Katowice, Poland to call for a strong response to climate change and unite with others in representing the Catholic Church's commitment to care for creation.

**T**hroughout the next two weeks, we will be present at the COP, participating in and hosting a wide number of events. [A full list of the COP24 events can be found here](#), and some highlights of ways you can support this work at the COP or from your own country:

- GCCM was able to facilitate the distribution of prayer cards to all Catholic parishes in Poland prior to COP24. On Dec. 9 all 10,000 parishes in Poland will be praying for Our

Common Home. [You are invited to pray with them.](#)

- The Climate Pilgrims will be arriving on Dec. 8. Those at COP are invited to join all in welcoming them, and those around the world are [invited to send prayers](#) to the pilgrims on their journey.
- Also on Dec. 8 we will be joining Caritas Polska to host a full day conference at the Panewniki Franciscan Friary. [Register here](#), and join for all or part of this exciting day featuring climate activists from around the world.

**A**ll the events, and how to participate even if you're not at the COP, [are found here](#). And for additional prayer resources, [check out our full Advent Guide](#).

■ *Global Catholic Climate Movement*

## U.S. BISHOPS CONDUCT CANONICAL CONSULTATION ON CAUSE FOR CANONIZATION OF SR. THEA BOWMAN, F.S.P.A.

November 14, 2018

BALTIMORE— At their annual fall Plenary Assembly in Baltimore, MD, the U.S. Bishops participated in a consultation on the cause for sainthood of the Servant of God Sr. Thea Bowman, F.S.P.A.

Bishop Robert P. Deeley, Chairman of the Committee on Canonical Affairs and Church Governance, and Bishop Joseph R. Kopacz, Bishop of Jackson, Mississippi, the petitioner of the cause, facilitated the discussion. By a voice vote, the bishops indicated unanimous support for the advancement of the cause on the diocesan level.

A self-proclaimed, “old folks’ child,” Bowman, was the only child born to middle-aged parents, Dr. Theon Bowman, a physician and Mary Esther Bowman, a teacher. At birth she was given the name Bertha Elizabeth Bowman. She was born in 1937 and reared in Canton, Mississippi. As a child she converted to



Catholicism through the inspiration of the Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual Adoration and the Missionary Servants of the Most Holy Trinity who were her teachers and pastors at Holy Child Jesus Church and School in Canton.

At an early age, Thea was exposed to the richness of her African-American culture and spirituality, most especially the history, stories, songs, prayers, customs and traditions. At the age of fifteen, she told her parents and friends she wanted to join the Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual Adoration and left the familiar Mississippi terrain

to venture to the unfamiliar town of La Crosse, WI where she would be the only African-American member of her religious community. At her religious profession, she was given the name, “Sister Mary Thea” in honor of the Blessed Mother and her father, Theon. Her name in religious life, Thea, literally means “God.” She was trained to become a teacher. She taught at all grade levels, eventually earning her doctorate and becoming a college professor of English and linguistics.

In 1984, Sister Thea faced devastating challenges: both her parents died, and she

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## National Black Sisters’ Conference Remembered Sister Ann Michael Boyd

**Sister Ann Michael Boyd** was a leader. She served as Superior of the Sisters of St. Francis of Rice Lake and brought about the merger of the Sisters of St. Francis of Rice Lake with the Sisters of St. Joseph of the Third Order of St. Francis.

She is remembered as a woman who inspired love and trust in many people,

especially in our Sisters, who saw her as a prayerful, compassionate woman who responded quietly to need where she saw it.

She could accept the difficult and work through it to the best of her ability without fanfare or complaint. ■



*Sr. Thea Bowman...continued from p. 3*

**“By a voice vote, the bishops indicated unanimous support for the advancement of the cause [for the canonization of Sr. Thea Bowman, FSPA] on the diocesan level.”**

-www.usccb.org

was diagnosed with breast cancer. Sister Thea vowed to “live until I die” and continued her rigorous schedule of speaking engagements. Even when it became increasingly painful and difficult to travel as the cancer metastasized to her bones, she was undeterred from witnessing and sharing her boundless love for God and the joy of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Donned in her customary African garb, Sister Thea would arrive in a wheel chair with no hair (due to the chemotherapy treatments) but always with her a joyful disposition and pleasant smile. She did not let the deterioration of her body keep her from one unprecedented event, an opportunity to address the U.S. Bishops at their annual June meeting held in 1989 at Seton Hall University in East Orange, NJ. Sister Thea spoke to the bishops as a sister having a “heart

to heart” conversation with her brothers.

She explained what it meant to be African-American and Catholic. She enlightened the bishops on African-American history and spirituality. Sister Thea urged the bishops to continue to evangelize the African-American community, to promote inclusivity and full participation of African-Americans within Church leadership, and to understand the necessity and value of Catholic schools in the African-American community. At the end of her address, she invited the bishops to move together, cross arms and sing with her, “We Shall Overcome.” She seemingly touched the hearts of the bishops as evidenced by their thunderous applause and tears flowing from their eyes.

During her short lifetime (52 years), many people considered her a religious

Sister undeniably close to God and who lovingly invited others to encounter the presence of God in their lives. She is acclaimed a “holy woman” in the hearts of those who knew and loved her and continue to seek her intercession for guidance and healing.

Today across the United States there are schools; an education foundation to assist needy students to attend Catholic universities; housing units for the poor and elderly, and a health clinic for the marginalized named in her honor. Books, articles, catechetical resources, visual media productions, a stage play, have been written documenting her exemplary life. Prayer cards, works of art, statues, and stained-glass windows bearing her image all attest to Sister Thea’s profound spiritual impact and example of holiness for the faithful. ■



**“We believe she’d find hope that, in this canonization process, there’s continued movement toward racial equality.”**

– Sister Eileen McKenzie, FSPA President, in the La Crosse Tribune

### **US Bishops: Racism is a Persistent Evil**

The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops has approved a new pastoral letter – [Open Wide Our Hearts: The Enduring Call to Love](#) – examining the “persistent” history of racism in this nation.

The report is particularly timely in that the FBI recently [reported](#) that hate crimes increased by 17 percent in 2017 with the most common bias being “race/ethnicity/ancestry.”



## Marian Prayer

Mary, most holy, Mother of God, Mother of all nations  
Help us recall that the universe is one song of praise  
And all are created to be the beloved of God.

Make us one in the Trinity  
All Nations  
No Nations,  
No boundaries, only expanses,  
No borders only homelands.  
No separations only communion.  
As it was in the beginning.

Mary, Queen of peace  
We entrust our lives to you.  
Shelter us from hatred and meanness.

Teach us  
To live in peace  
To be peace with one another

Inspire us to act with kindness,  
To reserve all God has made

Root peace firmly in our hearts, with each other  
And in our world.

Amen

*Sister Diane Smith, CSJ*



*“Stemming from our Franciscan values and the fact that all life is interconnected, members, vowed and non-vowed, are encouraged to be engaged in ministry with those living on the margins of society and struggling to live with dignity.”*

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**May you have a  
Blessed  
Christmas!**

- Your Social Justice  
Committee

## HOMELESSNESS

### **The Homeless Crisis Is Getting Worse in America's Richest Cities**

— Bloomberg Business, November 20, 2018

Big-city homelessness is most visible in the West, where shelter shortages are forcing many to sleep in their cars. The number of Seattle's "unsheltered" homeless on a single night in January 2018 jumped 15 percent from January 2017, while the value of the city's dominant employer, Amazon, increased 68 percent. The number of California's homeless increased 14 percent from 2016. The combination of slow wage growth and skyrocketing rents has created a housing market out of reach for increasing numbers of people. In Los Angeles, a 5 percent rental rate increase results in 2,000 additional homeless people.

### **REMEMBER...**

We welcome your submissions in the form of

- “Sightings”
- Brief write-ups of your activities, suggestions for workshops, books, articles, films, resources, etc.

Note: The **next issue** of *We Commit Ourselves* will be published in **February**.

**Please send** any items for inclusion in this next issue to **Associate Jennifer Dillon** no later than **January 25<sup>th</sup>**, one month after Christmas.

~ Your Social Justice Committee